



What Do Santa Clara County and the City of San Jose Have in Common? Their Residents

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, August 27, 2007

City Hall Diary

On Thursday, August 23, 2007, the elected officials of the City of San Jose and Santa Clara County met to talk about five top priorities that affect the city and county. City and county staff attended, including San Jose City Manager Debra Figone and County Executive Pete Kutas.

It's no secret that the relationship between the county and the city has been less than stellar. For example, a few years ago San Jose sued the county over the county's attempt to build a concert hall at the fairgrounds. The city sued because they wanted to build a concert hall downtown. Guess what? Both entities lost and the talk of a concert hall has been put to rest for now.

Residents of District 6 have shared that the sparring between the two governments is foolish. Suing someone only to lose over \$20 million like the city did to the county is not in the best interests of the community. So, in an attempt to move beyond the courtroom, both entities have moved to City Hall and County Chambers to begin the process of rebuilding their relationship—a relationship that is more open, harmonious and collaborative for the sake of our future.

The city and county both have elected officials that genuinely care about their constituencies; however, both are suffering from structural deficits, pension liabilities and a growing need of services from their respective populations. Both know that they will not be able to deliver the same services in the same way for much longer. Therefore, they both understand the need to find commonalities on issues that we share a mutual interest in so that we can best serve the residents.

Below are the five priorities that were discussed at the meeting and one other important issue.

Former City Hall

The county is interested in purchasing old City Hall. The city is interested in getting the most monetary or other type of value from City Hall. Some feel that City Hall is an historic building and should not be knocked down, but preserved.

Fairgrounds

A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been circulated for the possible development of the 136 acre site. Some of the other options that have been discussed include commercial, parkland dedication, a possible new site for the fire training center and organized play for soccer, softball, etc. and an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Coyote EIR

The county (and I share the view) has concerns with the traffic impact, limited parks and development next to creeks known as the Riparian Corridor. I have recommended and will continue to recommend that we stop "planning" for Coyote Valley and thus not develop. I agree with the county that the impact to our current infrastructure will be detrimental. In addition, the City of San Jose has had some of its best planners working on Coyote Valley instead of on other land use issues that are important to the city.

Annexation

There is agreement between the county, city and state at this time to move forward in trying to annex various pockets of property that are currently surrounded by the city. Many District 6 residents, as well as others throughout the city, support annexation.

Pandemic Flu/Emergencies

Discussion also included the need for collaboration between the city and county regarding emergency preparedness. This will most likely be an ongoing issue with updates, etc.

Willow Glen Spur Trail

Although the Willow Glen Spur Trail was not included as one of the top priorities, it is an important subject. The Willow Glen Spur Trail is a former rail line owned by Union Pacific Railroad which runs through Districts 3, 6, and 7. The development of this trail will connect the Los Gatos Creek Trail to the Coyote Creek Trail. The railroad company is not in the business of creating walkable, livable communities like the city and county are; therefore, it has been difficult to acquire land for this trail in a timely manner. However, from my conversations with my colleagues, there is support to keep this future trail alive and to move forward with its completion. I can speak for myself when I say that I will not support any zoning change to the former rail property that would block the future trail.

I am optimistic that the city and county can maximize their assets for a win-win situation that benefits both governments and, most importantly, its residents.

What do you think the city should do with old City Hall? What do you think the county should do with the fairgrounds?

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